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ABSTRACT

Time management may be the most important study skill. The effects of a specific teaching technique designed to alter the time management skills of undergraduate students in a voluntary study skills course were assessed. Of the 95 subjects, 34 were enrolled in the course and were exposed to time management instruction, 31 were future course enrollees, and 30 were on the course waiting list. All subjects recorded daily activities for one week on a Time Use Inventory, and completed the Self-Survey Index and the Inventory of Study Habits and Attitudes. No significant differences were found between groups on total hours of study time, social, leisure, and miscellaneous activities after time management instruction, or on the organizational scale of the survey of Study Habits and Attitudes. Results suggested that time management instruction was ineffective because actual time use did not improve. Students, however, reported that they felt the instruction had made a difference in their use of time. Findings also showed that females managed their time better than males and that senior-level students studied more than other students. (NPB)

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TIME MANAGEMENT IN COLLEGE

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TIME MANAGEMENT IN COLLEGE

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Almost all college reading teachers teach study skills. Perhaps the most important of the study skills, time management is also a matter of concern to counselors, other study skill teachers, and all who advise students. Students regularly report the need for establishing a time plan and keeping a study schedule (Olsen, 1958), (Strong, 1957). Consistently included in reading-study skills books and courses, it is frequent topic of workshops, lectures, and orientation presentations. Its popularity is also related to the belief that time management skills contribute to success and mental health.

A fifty year search of the college time use literature using the Raygor reading-study skills research file at the University of Minnesota was undertaken. The following conclusions emerged. Most studies are descriptive indicating that students spend about forty hours a week going to class and studying (Dole, 1959). No support was found for the one hour of study for one hour of class time prescription so frequently encountered in print. The ratio is closer to one to one (Yarington, 1957). Sex and age differences in time use studies generally indicate that females study more than males (Malleson, 1960) and that seniors engage in more extra-curricular activities than other class members (Andrews, 1930). Small G.P.A. gains were usually found in study skill courses or programs where time management was included (Entwisle, 1960).

According to the literature survey, most prescriptions of how to manage time are not data based. They range from lists of detailed do's and don'ts, to goal setting activities, to general considerations of individual differences in work rates, values, and emotional health. Therefore, the study was under-

taken to assess the effects of a specific teaching technique designed to alter the time management skills of students attending a voluntary University of Florida reading-study skills course. Secondary purposes included assessment of time management instruction on study habits and attitudes, perceived satisfaction and improvement, and sex and grade level variables in relation to the instruction given.

METHOD

Instruments

The Time Use Inventory was developed to record daily activities and the amount of time spent on each during a one week period. Students recorded in hours and minutes the time spent in 12 explicitly and carefully defined categories including "miscellaneous" to account for all of a 168 hour week. Records were kept to the nearest quarter hour and entries made several times each day.

The Self-Survey Index was a ten question study skills inventory to measure self-satisfaction and perceived improvement in a number of study skills including time management. It was validated for content by a panel of experienced faculty; a reliability score of .89 was obtained on a test-retest basis.

The Inventory of Study Habits and Attitudes, part of the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Study Skills Test, was also administered. Responses for the Organization of Effort subscale items were specifically analyzed for time use results. Each of the three instruments were administered at approximately the same time during the quarter. The sixth week was selected since it was considered relatively free of unusual time pressures.

Participants and Procedures

Ninety-five undergraduate students from the University of Florida par-

ticipated in the study. Of that number, 34 were enrolled in two sections of a voluntary reading-study skills course and were exposed to time management instruction. Control group I consisted of thirty-one students who enrolled in an additional two sections of the course. Control group II included thirty students who were on the waiting list at the Reading and Study Skills Center. All students were considered highly motivated to improve their skills and had registered voluntarily. Neither control group received study skills instruction until after the data had been collected. Demographic characteristics were determined for each subject on sex, G.P.A., grade level, and registration hours. Chi square analysis indicated there were not significant differences on any of the variables between the different groups.

A posttest-only design as described by Campbell and Stanley (1966) was employed to test the research questions. The experimental group received time management instruction during the sixth week of a ten week term consisting of a seven point format. It emphasized Pauk's approach (1974) and established term, weekly, and daily goals for each student. Instruction totaled 2½ hours and was accompanied by daily assignments in goal setting for a two week period.

Data were subjected to analysis of variance to determine differences among groups on time spent in study, social, leisure and miscellaneous activities, and scores on the two study skills instruments. For significant differences found, a Student-Newman-Keuls comparison test was employed to locate the source of the difference. An Alpha level of .05 was established as an acceptable level of significance on all measurements.

RESULTS

No significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups on total hours of study time, social, leisure, and miscellaneous activities after instruction in time management.

No significant differences were found between groups on the organizational scale of the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes.

Table 1 about here

In table 1, a significant difference ($P < .05$) between the experimental and control groups was found on item 8 of the Self Survey Index. An investigation of the direction of differences indicated in response to the statement, "I feel that my time management skills have improved since the start of the quarter." The experimental group responded positively, significantly more often than Control Groups I and II. Experimental group students did perceive that they had improved in the time management skill during the quarter of instruction.

In regard to the sex variable, significant differences ($P < .05$) were found for three items on the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes. Females said that they were more "up to date in their schoolwork," "used their study time more efficiently," and experienced fewer times when "the work in a course piled up, requiring mad cramming at the end," as compared with males. Senior females also consistently and significantly ($P < .05$) reported higher scores than senior males on items of the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes indicating not falling behind, putting things off, studying haphazardly or letting course work pile up.

A significant difference ($P < .05$) between grade levels was found in study activity on the Time Use Inventory. Seniors reported a weekly amount of study, 29.9 hours, which was significantly ($P < .05$) more than that reported by any other grade level. Freshmen were next highest reporting 22.2 hours, juniors were third highest with 21.8 hours, and sophomores studied the least, reporting

21.62 hours per week. This does not include time spent in class.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that actual time use did not improve after time management instruction. It is noted, however, that the posttest-only design precluded use of the more common pretest-posttest design where differences might have emerged. This highlights the problems of using self-report time use measures in this type of study. In the process of carefully recording time use for a week long period, students usually became unduly sensitized to the way their time is being used. In other words, their use of time is affected because of the attention the recording process requires which in turn contaminates the research purposes for which a pretest is usually given. This had been the conclusion of the researchers in several unpublished similar studies even though pre and post differences usually resulted. Consequently, for this study the posttest-only design was chosen. In retrospect, however, it remains only speculative whether such a pretest-posttest design format might have yielded different results.

Of more importance, this study suggests that the time management instruction was ineffective since actual time use did not improve. However, contrary to the data, the students reported that they felt the instruction had made a difference in their use of time in that quarter. Perhaps not enough time had passed for measured changes to appear. However, a more likely explanation is that observed in many experimental instructional situations; that is, students report they are improving when data indicate they really are not. The investment of time and effort perhaps causes students to report improvement because that is their expectation and justifies in their own minds their enrollment in the course.

The sex difference findings suggested that females managed their time better than males and that senior students studied more than other classes. These findings were not unexpected since they reflect findings of some other studies. Results, however, should be qualified since these courses were voluntary and elective on a pass/fail grading basis.

IMPLICATIONS

For reading-study skill teachers, counselors, and other student personnel workers, the fact that students felt they were improving is worth noting. Positive feelings so reported can motivate changes of many kinds and be symptomatic of improving self-esteem. For many students, feeling better about themselves and their ability to control their lives, cope with their environment, etc., can stimulate positive behavioral change in many areas other than just time use.

In regards to the research design problem, this topic of time use and management using self-report measures is particularly resistant to objective analysis. While this study represents an attempt, future studies may be more effective using other more objective data collection methods than by having students record their own time use. Then the pre-post test conventional experimental design may be more relevant and useful to studies of this type.

Student personnel workers, however, should recognize that we are still without validated procedures of managing time in college. Consequently, care should be taken that the glib prescriptions from much of the literature not be imposed on students who are trying to find out what works best for them. The best of the literature reminds us that time management comprehends values, life style, self-discipline, and mental health. In other words, time management is a delicate and complicated matter. Teachers and counselors should be very cautious in presenting rigid approaches to time management that may help one

but hurt another. They should also be careful about recommending approaches based only on their own personal experience as students. In light of the lack of a research base, flexibility would seem advisable in dealing with student needs of this type.

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Table 1

Results of analysis of variance for groups on Items 2 and 8 of the Self-Survey Index.

Source Group	SS	DF	MS	F
Item 2*	0.021	2	0.010	0.011
Item 8*	19.104	2	9.552	12.028**

*Item 2 = "I feel that I generally do a satisfactory job of managing my time."

*Item 8 = "I feel that my time management skills have improved since the start of this quarter.

**Significant at .05 level.